

My Heber Valley Roots

BY RALPH B. MONTGOMERY

From John Crook's Diary Provided by
Clark and Phyllis Crook

Without John Crook's diary much of the early day to day activities of Heber Valley would be lost. John kept a diary all his life as well as recording and reporting the weather of the valley.

The weather is still recorded and reported by J Crook, John's great-grandson, and his wife Phyllis. It is fitting that John Crook tell his own story by using excerpts from his diary with my comments in parentheses.

"I was born in Trenton, Lancashire, England, in 1831, About 9 years old I was sent to the Eagley Bridge Mills, winding spools for Father; he was tape weaving. My sister, Alice, and I made a full team, half the time each in factory, and the other attending school.

Children were not allowed full time until 13 years past. After arriving at 12 years I was set to weaving tapes, attending 2 looms of 50 shuttles, under Wm. Cooper, earning at first 6 shillings per week, increased to 8 shillings with overtime.

I was brought up strictly moral and was religiously inclined. My father heard of a new religion and went to Bolton to hear them preach, and on Sept. 1840 he and Robert Holden were baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ, L.D.S.

About this time my father would have me and sister Alice go with him to Bolton, attending the meetings, 2 1/2 miles walking by his side each holding onto his hands.

Jan 8th, 1851 We left old England to come to America in the ship Ellen. There were about 475 passengers, and about 25 crew. About 12 o'clock at night a schooner crossed our track and we collided with her. We had to put in Cardigan Bay, North Wales for repairs.

We stayed until the 23rd of Jan. then set sail again. We were becalmed two or three days in the West Indies. We sailed between Jamaica and San Domingo Islands. March 13th came in sight of the Mississippi; could see the line of the river waters a long time.

March 16th A tug boat took two more vessels besides ours up to New Orleans. March 18th started up the river for St. Louis. It was very cold there; snow on the

ground. Stayed there until April 13th. Then started for Kanesville or Council Bluffs. Fare 5 dollars per head. Twenty days on the river.

Stuck on a sand bar for 3 days, river very low, very cold weather. Great amount of snags to be seen. Landed safe May 2nd. We stayed the summer in Kanesville. It was very hot and wet. Every night clouds would rise in the west. There would be rain, thunder and lightning, terrible to behold.

In the spring (1852), Father worked six weeks fitting up wagons. They said all should go as wanted to go. But when the time came around for going we could not get a chance to go (no room they said).

When Father was told that there was no show for him to get away he felt very bad over it. After the authorities promising that all that turned in and worked, none should be left behind. In fact he never seemed to get over it. He seemed to have no life left for anything, and in the month of July he took the chills and fever.

In about 2 weeks he was a corpse, died broken hearted. He was buried in the cemetery north of Kanesville. Myself and brother-in-law had to dig the grave, none coming around to give a helping hand.

(John Crook and his sisters, Betsy and Alice, stayed in the Council Bluffs area until June 1856 when John left for Utah with the William Giles family in the E. B. Tripp Company. Betsy and Alice remained in Council Bluffs, marrying and living there until their deaths.)

Aug. 14th We had to camp in Emigration canyon that night. Early next morning we hitched up and about four miles down the canyon the road passed over what is termed a Hogs back, a road cut through a hill. And then you had a full view of Salt Lake City and valley. There was blue water of the Salt Lake in the far west and the beautiful settlements in the foreground. Enchanting to the eye.

There was the scene before us that we had long looked for, and read and sung about, the city of the Saints. Oh what a joy filled each bosom at the sight. About noon we rolled into Salt Lake City and went into camp on Emigration square.

We hitched teams, appointed guards and sent cattle to the range some three miles north and beyond Ensign Peak, there to be herded until such time as all parties

had made arrangements to scatter throughout the territory wherever friends or connections resided.

Aug. 19th The Giles and myself, four teams of us, started for Provo City and camped on the Jordan River that night. Next day Mr. J. B. Milner of Provo met us. We camped for sometime in our wagons in Mr. Milner's lot. We went to work helping farmers to harvest.

George Ekin gave me a job of

cutting wheat with a sickle. Not having done much of that kind of work it was slow business, and I nearly cut off my little finger on my left hand. But I kept at it until I got the patch down.

On September 6th 1856 I married Mary Giles in Provo City. Pop J. O. Duke performed the ceremony. I was still sleeping in the wagon, so our first night after marriage was in the wagon. And many more until sometime about November. Then Thomas Rasband, my brother-in-law, suggested that we rent a house of one room for the winter.

We rented the house from

Father Cluff, and we still slept in the wagon all winter. The house being small we could not very well all sleep in the house comfortably. I had the dysentery all winter which often attacks new comers to Utah and it brought me down very low. I had to use opium pills to ease the pain so that I could sleep a little at nights. We all worked together through the season and shared alike.

We bought ten acres of land joining on the east line of Provo City and had the county surveyor to divide it up into lots, giving us two lots each, six families of the Giles connections. Each sold off a

yoke of cattle to provide money. We made some adobes and built two small houses for Father and Thomas Giles. Next year we built two more houses, one for me and wife and one for Thomas Rasband and family.

This was the agreement to work together until we all had houses to live in. John and Fred Giles were not married, the other two having city lots. One yoke of cattle was the purchase price I believe, valued at \$100 from Jared Bullock.

In the next installment of this column, John Crook's diary will tell of coming into Heber Valley.